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THE NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUMS OF BRITISH COLUMBIA.

IN proportion to the population and total number of educational institutions, British Columbia has an unusual number of natural history museums. These are exceptionally well administered, considering their isolation from other scientific institutions.

The Provincial Museum at Victoria is by far the most important one in the Province. It is located in the east wing of the Parliament Building, thus having the facilities of the Parliamentary Library. The staff consists of the curator, Mr. John Fannin, a taxidermist and two floor attendants. The Museum was originated some years ago by the government, at the suggestion of Mr. Fannin, whose private collection formed the nucleus of the Museum, after having been the stimulus for its foundation.

As Mr. Fannin's special interest lies in the fauna of the Province, to the knowledge of which he has made important contributions, the trend of the Museum is in this direction, although the other departments of natural history are by no means neglected.

Special attention is now being given to the building of groups of birds and mammals represented in their natural environments. The interest of the people in this work may be gauged from the fact that Mr. Fannin was sent to the great museums of England

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and the eastern United States to investigate the methods of preparing such groups.

The policy of the Museum is to be mainly provincial and, while specimens from all parts of the world are used for comparison, the endeavor is thoroughly to represent the natural history of the Province, so that visitors from foreign countries may see at a glance the natural treasures of the region.

The collection contains a good representation of the birds and mammals of the Province. At present efforts are being made to improve the mountings and secure better specimens of the species. Fish are represented by gelatine casts and alcoholic specimens. The value of the collection will soon be in proportion to the importance of the fisheries of the coast. There are some specimens illustrating osteology. A considerable collection of crustaceans and shells is also on exhibition, as well as a beautiful series of butterflies and other insects.

This rich mining region is naturally productive of fine mineral specimens, which are represented in the Museum, together with the paleontological collections. Although the Province is excessively rich in anthropological material, its representation in the Museum has been somewhat curtailed from lack of funds. However, there is a fair collection of casts of faces of men; stone, bone and antler implements from shell heaps and mounds; several totem poles, carvings and other ethnological material from the Indian villages of the coast. The implements of hunting and the chase are classed together, as are also the specimens connected with fishing, houses and property, travel, religion, etc.

The Museum is fairly well arranged, and the labeling will put to shame many of the great museums of the East, although, as with all such institutions, constant improvements are being made.

The city of Vancouver, with a population of some twenty thousand, seems too young to show much interest in the museum as a natural adjunct to education, although the Art and Scientific Society is endeavoring to form a museum in its rooms.

New Westminster, with a population of eight thousand, has made a splendid beginning towards a museum properly connected with other educational affairs. The upper story of the City Library has been set aside for museum purposes.* Cases have been built from plans furnished by the Smithsonian Institution, and space has been allotted for the various divisions of natural history. There has already been secured and installed a considerable collection of birds and small mammals. Many of these were donated by the Provincial Museum. Several cases have been filled with minerals and other geological specimens. A very few ethnological specimens have been secured; there is more material of an archæological nature. Some of the stone and bone implements represent rare forms.

The spirit of museum administration exhibited at these institutions is one to be commended. There seems to be no thought in mind to conflict with the plan that the collections are intended for study. Every facility is given to visitors to examine, illustrate or publish papers on any of the

* The Library and Natural History Museum of New Westminster were totally destroyed by the fire which consumed that city on September 11, 1898.

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material within the museums. It is also understood that full labels are desired. In fact, the spirit shown in these museums is one in close cooperation with research and education.

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